



Bollywood's Role in Shaping Travel Aspirations and Destination Images: A Case Study of *3 Idiots* and *Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara*

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Abstract— This chapter studies how cinema shapes the perception and desirability of real-world destinations through the lens of Baloglu and McCleary's Destination Image Formation Model (1999), focusing on the Indian films *3 Idiots* (2009) and *Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara* (2011) as case studies. By analysing how *3 Idiots* transformed Ladakh's Pangong Lake into a symbol of personal discovery and adventure, and how *Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara* reframed Spain as a vibrant landscape of friendship and self-exploration, the chapter explores the powerful influence of cinematic narratives, visuals, and character journeys on the formation of cognitive, affective, and conative images of these locations. Situating the discussion at the crossroads of travel studies, cultural geography, and media representation, the study demonstrates how films not only promote tourism but also redefine the global image and brand identity of destinations, shaping travel trends and aspirations among audiences in India and beyond.



Keywords— Film-Induced Tourism, Destination Image Formation, Bollywood, *3 Idiots*, *Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara*, Travel Aspirations.

I. INTRODUCTION

Film tourism has emerged over the last three decades as “a rapidly growing and important new tourism trend” in which the choice of destination is “directly motivated and inspired by the movies” (Gjorgievski & Trpkova, 2011). Defined as “on-location tourism that follows the success of a movie made (or set) in a particular region” (Gjorgievski & Trpkova, 2011), film-induced tourism foregrounds the role of audiovisual narratives in attracting visitors to real places that they have first encountered on screen. What was once described as an “incidental phenomenon” (Gjorgievski & Trpkova, 2011), unplanned surges of visitors to locations used in films have now become a strategically managed niche that destination marketers and policy makers actively seek to harness.

Destination image provides a key conceptual bridge between cinema and tourism research. A “commonly

adopted definition of image” in tourism studies is “a set of beliefs, ideas, and impressions that people have of a place or destination”, understood as “a mental representation of an object or place which is not physically before the observer”. Early marketing and geography work emphasised the perceptual-cognitive content of image, but Lawson and Baud-Bovy already stressed that destination image is “the expression of all knowledge, impressions, prejudices and emotional thoughts an individual or group has of a particular object or place” (Ruiz, Gonzalez, & Zamora, 2018), signalling the importance of both cognitive and affective dimensions. Building on this tradition, (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999) developed “a model of destination image formation” that integrates stimuli (such as media, marketing and previous experience) with personal factors (such as socio-demographics and motivations) to explain how tourists form cognitive, affective and overall images which, in turn, shape behavioural intentions. Their

work has become a foundational framework for examining how mediated representations translate into perceptions of places and decisions to visit them.

Film tourism has often been described as a contemporary extension of long-standing practices of literary tourism, but with a distinctive intensification of the visual and affective dimensions of place experience. Riley, Baker and Van Doren's early study of "movie-induced tourism" highlighted how popular films such as *Crocodile Dundee* coincided with significant increases in visitors to their shooting locations, demonstrating that "films can have a powerful influence on travel decisions" (Riley, Baker, & Van Doren, 1998). Subsequent research broadened this insight, documenting cases where film exposure altered tourist flows even in the absence of conventional marketing campaigns, leading Gjorvievski to argue that "film tourism establishes a link between the movie characters, locations and stories, and the film-tourists, who are inspired to immerse themselves and relive again the movie-generated and movie-driven emotions at the location of the movie" (Gjorgievski & Trpkova, 2011). From this perspective, films do not merely showcase scenery; they construct emotionally charged "imagined geographies" that visitors seek to inhabit and re-enact.

By the mid-2000s, film tourism had become prominent enough for Beeton to define "film-induced tourism" as a form of postmodern tourist experience in which people visit destinations "after watching any destinations or activities through movies or TV screens", underscoring the mediating function of screen images in generating desire to travel. Hudson and Ritchie's influential case study of *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* further demonstrated that "film tourism is a growing phenomenon worldwide" and that films can significantly "influence travel decisions", though they also warned that tourism impacts are not always proportional to box-office performance or marketing spend. Synthesising this expanding literature, Connell observed that "film tourism has emerged as a major growth sector for tourism research and it is widely recognised as a driver of tourism development for many destinations" (Connell, 2012), while also noting the relative lack of engagement with broader film and media theory.

More recent work has sought to systematise these insights and connect film tourism more explicitly to destination image research. Reviews of destination image studies emphasise that image is multidimensional, comprising interrelated cognitive, affective and conative components that together shape "the sum of the beliefs, feelings, conceptions, knowledge, imaginations, emotional thoughts, ideas, and impressions held by people about a place or destination" (Yang, Isa, Yao, Xia, & Liu, 2022). Structural

models now frequently treat conative image, intentions to visit or recommend, as an outcome of cognitive and affective evaluations, allowing researchers to trace how specific media exposures influence travel behaviour. Within this context, film tourism research has increasingly moved beyond simple before-and-after visitor counts to examine how films function as powerful stimuli in the destination image formation process, interacting with existing stereotypes, marketing campaigns and personal motivations.

Bollywood and other non-Western cinemas play a significant role in this evolving field, though they have been less extensively theorised than Hollywood examples. Studies of *3 Idiots* and Pangong Lake indicate that the film has contributed to "drastic" increases in tourist arrivals and the creation of new film-branded attractions, illustrating how a single popular text can reconfigure the domestic image of a remote region (Namgail & Bhagat, 2019). Similarly, analyses of *Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara* suggest that the film has helped construct "exotic Spain" for the Indian middle class, aligning its road-trip narrative with Spain's official branding and giving rise to film-themed itineraries and targeted campaigns (Izquierdo Tobias, 2017). These cases demonstrate that Indian cinema not only participates in global circuits of film tourism but also produces distinct, classed imaginaries of both domestic and international destinations.

Against this backdrop, the present chapter brings together Baloglu and McCleary's destination image formation model and qualitative film analysis to examine how two iconic Hindi films, *3 Idiots* (2009) and *Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara* (2011), shape the perception and desirability of Ladakh's Pangong Lake and various Spanish locations, respectively. Treating the films as complex "stimulus" (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999) packages that combine narrative, character arcs, visual aesthetics and music, the chapter analyses how they construct cognitive images (beliefs and knowledge about attractions, activities and infrastructure), affective images (moods and feelings attached to place) and conative images (encouragements to visit and re-enact on-screen journeys). Situated at the intersection of travel studies, cultural geography and media representation, this approach aims to show how Bollywood's cinematic geographies contribute to the rebranding of both domestic and international destinations, while also extending destination image theory into the realm of close textual analysis.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Destination Image and DIFM

Baloglu and McCleary's (1999) model conceptualises destination image as the outcome of interactions between information-based 'stimulus' factors and traveller 'personal' characteristics, culminating in cognitive, affective and conative evaluations. Stimulus factors encompass a variety of information sources, including media representations, marketing campaigns, word-of-mouth and prior visits, while personal factors include socio-demographic variables, values, motivations and psychological predispositions. These antecedents shape two primary image components: the cognitive image, defined as "beliefs, knowledge, and perceptions regarding a destination's general attributes" (such as scenery, attractions, infrastructure, safety and value), and the affective image, comprising "individual feelings toward, or affective perceptions of, a destination's attributes" (often measured on bipolar scales like arousing-sleepy, pleasant-unpleasant, exciting-gloomy) (Baloglu & McCleary, 1999). The interaction of cognitive and affective evaluations produces an overall or 'holistic' image, which in turn influences cognitive or behavioural intentions, including the desire to visit, recommend or revisit a destination.

This structured process of image formation has been widely adopted in tourism research because it integrates external influences with internal processing, explaining why the same stimulus, such as a film, can generate divergent images among different audiences. Empirical tests of the model, often using structural equation modelling on survey data, consistently show that stimulus and personal factors account for significant variance in cognitive and affective images, which together predict 30–50% of variance in overall image and behavioural intentions. Later refinements have operationalised the conative dimension more explicitly as "behavioural intentions" (Soonsan & Sukahbot, 2020) or "destination loyalty" (Artuger, Cetinsoz, & Kilic, 2013), while incorporating cultural moderators such as individualism or uncertainty avoidance to account for cross-cultural differences in image processing. For instance, Yang et al. (2022) (Yang, Isa, Yao, Xia, & Liu, 2022) extend the framework by demonstrating how cultural values mediate the cognitive–affective pathway, yet they reaffirm Baloglu and McCleary's core typology as foundational. Similarly, Tasci et al. (2007) (Tasci, Gartner, & Cavusgil, 2007) propose a comprehensive conceptualisation of destination image that encompasses its functional relationships with supply-side marketing and demand-side perceptions but anchor their typology in the cognitive–affective distinction from Baloglu and McCleary (1999).

Although quantitative applications dominate, the model's flexibility lends itself to qualitative reinterpretations, particularly for analysing mediated stimuli like films, where cognitive attributes (scenery, activities) and affective tones (excitement, nostalgia) are encoded directly in narrative and visual texts. Gartner's (1994) typology of image-forming agents further supports this adaptability, classifying sources into organic (passive, uncontrolled exposure, such as films) and induced (active marketing), with films often functioning as hybrid stimuli that blend both (Gartner, 1994). By anchoring the present analysis in Baloglu and McCleary (1999), the chapter prioritises their parsimonious yet robust structure while drawing selectively on these extensions to contextualise Bollywood's role in destination image formation.

2.2. Film-induced Tourism and Cinematic Geographies

Film-induced tourism, or "movie-induced tourism", refers to the phenomenon where films prompt tourists to visit on-screen locations, often generating measurable economic impacts through surges in visitor numbers and branded attractions. Pioneering work by Riley, Baker and Van Doren (1998) documented how popular movies like *Crocodile Dundee* and *Deliverance* transformed obscure sites into tourist hotspots, observing that "films can have a powerful influence on travel decisions" by compressing time and space into compelling visual narratives that make distant places feel immediate and desirable (Riley, Baker, & Van Doren, 1998). Hudson and Ritchie's (Hudson & Ritchie, 2006) case study of *Captain Corelli's Mandolin* further established that "film tourism is a growing phenomenon worldwide" capable of influencing both short-term visitor spikes and longer-term destination branding, though outcomes depend on factors like film popularity, media coverage and local marketing response (p. 257). Beeton (Beeton, 2005) synthesised these insights into a comprehensive framework, defining film-induced tourism as a postmodern form of escapism where visitors seek to "re-live" on-screen emotions and stories at physical sites, blending cinematic fantasy with tangible place experience (p. 4).

Connell (Connell, 2012) charts the field's evolution from incidental "place promotion" to a recognised driver of tourism development, noting that "film tourism has emerged as a major growth sector for tourism research and it is widely recognised as a driver of tourism development for many destinations" (p. 1007). This literature highlights films' dual role as organic stimuli – uncontrolled media exposure that shapes pre-visit images – and induced stimuli when destinations capitalise through tours, signage and campaigns. In Bollywood contexts, studies of *3 Idiots* reveal how Pangong Lake was reimagined as a site of

personal discovery, leading to “drastic” increases in tourism and the emergence of film-themed props and photo points (Namgail & Bhagat, 2019). Similarly, *Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara* has positioned Spain’s Costa Brava, Pamplona, and Seville as landscapes of friendship and adventure for Indian audiences, aligning with national branding efforts such as “I need Spain” (Turespena, 2010-2016) and spawning dedicated itineraries.

Cultural geography provides complementary concepts of “cinematic landscapes” and “imagined geographies” to unpack how films construct place myths. Urry’s (2002) “tourist gaze” posits that tourists seek visually objectified signs of the extraordinary, with cinema reinforcing this through “swiftly passing series of framed panoramas” that detach landscapes from everyday contexts (Urry, 2002). Cresswell extends this to “place myths”, where films layer symbolic meanings onto physical sites, turning them into affective anchors for identity and aspiration (Cresswell, 2015). Destination branding literature underscores how such cinematic images can be institutionalised through marketing, as seen in Ladakh’s film policy and Spain’s targeted campaigns.

This chapter refunctions Baloglu and McCleary’s DIFM for film analysis by treating Bollywood films as multifaceted stimuli whose narrative structures, visual compositions and character journeys encode cognitive attributes (e.g., scenery, infrastructure, activities) and affective tones (e.g., exhilaration, serenity). Close readings will map these components onto holistic images, with post-release tourism flows, media coverage and promotional circuits serving as proxies for cognitive outcomes such as intention to visit. This approach bridges tourism’s structural models with film studies’ textual emphasis, revealing how cinema actively participates in destination image formation.

III. METHODOLOGY AND CORPUS

3.1. Case Selection and Context

The selection of *3 Idiots* (2009, directed by Rajkumar Hirani) and *Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara* (2011, directed by Zoya Akhtar) as case studies rests on three criteria: their commercial and cultural prominence, their explicit road-trip and journey structures, and their documented influence on tourism to specific destinations. Both films rank among Bollywood’s highest-grossing productions, with *3 Idiots* earning over ₹460 crore worldwide and achieving “iconic” status for its critique of education and celebration of friendship, while *ZNMD* grossed ₹153 crore and remains a benchmark for ensemble road movies. Their enduring popularity, evidenced by billions of YouTube views, meme culture and academic inclusion, ensures they continue shaping Indian travel imaginaries years after release.

Crucially, both foreground travel as a narrative engine: *3 Idiots* follows three engineering friends on a transformative road trip from urban India to the remote Himalayas, culminating in a life-affirming reunion at Pangong Lake, Ladakh, where the landscape becomes a metaphor for escape and self-discovery. *ZNMD*, meanwhile, tracks three male friends on a bachelor road trip across Spain, from Barcelona and Costa Brava beaches to Pamplona’s bull run, Seville’s flamenco and Buñol’s Tomatina festival, framing the country as a vibrant arena for adventure, bonding and personal reinvention. These arcs make the films ideal for analysing cinematic journeys as image-forming stimuli.

Finally, both demonstrate tangible tourism impacts. *3 Idiots* catalysed a “surge” in domestic visitors to Ladakh, with numbers quadrupling from 48,517 in 2009 to 142,829 in 2011, transforming Pangong Lake into a “must-visit” site complete with “Rancho cafés”, film props and dedicated photo points (Sruthijith, 2013). Ladakh officials now explicitly credit the film with positioning the region as a “global film destination” (Ladakh, 2025). Similarly, *ZNMD* correlated with a 32% rise in Indian tourists to Spain in the six months post-release, doubling annual figures to 60,444 by 2012 and prompting tour operators to launch film-themed circuits aligned with the “I need Spain” campaign. These cases thus exemplify Bollywood’s capacity to rebrand both domestic and international locales.

3.2. DIFM-guided Textual Analysis

This chapter employs a qualitative close reading of the films, guided by Baloglu and McCleary’s (1999) Destination Image Formation Model (DIFM), rather than a quantitative survey or structural equation test of the model. Close reading, a method from film and literary studies, involves repeated viewings to unpack how narrative, visuals, music and character arcs encode destination images, treating the films as “stimulus” texts that prospective tourists encounter organically. DIFM structures the analysis deductively, operationalising its components as coding categories while remaining open to filmic specificities like genre conventions and cultural resonance. A predefined coding grid derives directly from Baloglu and McCleary (1999). For cognitive image, scenes were tagged for attributes including scenery (natural features, landscapes), attractions (cultural sites, landmarks), activities (adventure, leisure, rituals), infrastructure (roads, transport, accommodation), safety (implied security), culture (local customs, hospitality), cost (value perceptions) and modernity/tradition balance (pp. 177–178). For affective image, bipolar scales informed mood identification: pleasant/unpleasant, arousing/sleepy, exciting/gloomy, relaxing/distressing, translated into filmic

tones such as adventure, serenity, anxiety, romance or nostalgia (p. 178). Conative image captured textual signals of desire to visit, revisit, recommend or “life-changing” experiences (e.g., characters’ exhortations to “chase your dreams” at Pangong), supplemented by paratextual evidence like tourism statistics, campaigns and operator itineraries.

Each film was viewed four times: twice for holistic immersion and twice for targeted coding using scene logs timestamped via streaming platforms. Key scenes were selected purposively: travel montages, destination arrivals, climactic moments and reflective voiceovers that crystallise place meanings (e.g., Pangong reunion in *3 Idiots*; bull run and diving in *ZNMD*). Secondary materials, media reports, tourism data and prior case studies triangulated conventional findings without constituting primary audience data. Limitations include the interpretive subjectivity of close reading and reliance on post-hoc tourism metrics rather than longitudinal viewer surveys; future work could incorporate reception analysis via social media or interviews. This method thus leverages DIFM’s rigour for humanities-oriented film analysis, illuminating how Bollywood texts generate actionable destination images.

IV. CASE STUDY-I: 3 IDIOTS AND LADAKH

4.1. Cognitive Construction of Ladakh

In *3 Idiots*, Ladakh, especially Pangong Lake, is constructed as a remote yet accessible landscape of striking natural beauty and minimal urban intrusion. The climactic scenes frame the lake as a wide expanse of turquoise water set against stark, brown-grey mountains, with a vast, almost empty shoreline punctuated only by a scooter, a car and a few scattered structures. Long shots and low camera angles emphasise the sheer scale and openness of the setting, visually aligning Ladakh with ideas of purity, escape and boundless possibility. The near-absence of dense urban architecture or crowds in these sequences codes the region as an uncluttered space beyond the pressures of city life, a place where the protagonists can step outside the rigid hierarchies of the engineering college and reimagine themselves. At the same time, the film carefully threads in cues of accessibility and safety that prevent Ladakh from appearing wholly sublime or unreachable. The protagonists arrive by road in a conventional vehicle, signalling that the journey is arduous but manageable for ordinary travellers; the film shows smooth roads, signboards and a modest roadside accommodation setup near the lake, implying a basic yet functional tourism infrastructure. Characters move freely without visible danger, and the bright daytime cinematography, clear skies and calm water project an

environment that is not only beautiful but also benign and secure. This combination of remoteness and reachability aligns with Baloglu and McCleary’s cognitive image attributes, scenery, attractions, accessibility and safety, positioning Ladakh as a landscape of “unadulterated natural beauty” that has been “exposed to the outside world through media (movie, film, cinematography, etc.)” (Namgail & Bhagat, 2019).

4.2. Affective Image: Friendship, Reconciliation, Self-discovery

The Ladakh sequences in *3 Idiots* carry the emotional weight of the narrative, binding friendship, reconciliation and self-discovery tightly to the landscape. The film’s parallel timelines converge at Pangong Lake, where long-standing conflicts between the three friends are resolved, misunderstandings are cleared, and the missing protagonist is finally rediscovered. The lakeside becomes the stage for both romantic closure, through the reunion of Rancho and Pia, and the affirmation of friendship, as the characters literally and metaphorically “arrive” at a new understanding of their lives. Close-ups of tearful embraces and joyful reactions are intercut with wide shots of the expansive lake and mountains, visually tying emotional healing to the openness and serenity of the setting. Cinematography, colour and music collectively produce an affective image that maps closely onto DIFM’s pleasant–unpleasant and arousing–sleepy axes. Warm, saturated hues in costumes and props stand out against the cool blues of the water and the muted earth tones of the mountains, creating a visual contrast that underscores the vitality the characters bring into a seemingly still landscape. The pacing slows during key reunion scenes, with lingering takes and gentle camera movements that evoke relaxation and reflection, while the score builds to a hopeful, uplifting crescendo, layering arousal and anticipation onto an otherwise tranquil environment. The overall mood is distinctly pleasant, relaxing yet emotionally arousing and hopeful, encouraging viewers to associate Ladakh not only with scenic grandeur but with inner transformation and emotional release. In Baloglu and McCleary’s terms, the film crafts an affective image of Ladakh as a space of warmth, freedom and renewal, complementing its cognitively encoded attributes.

4.3. Cognitive Image and Tourism Outcomes

The cognitive and affective images constructed by *3 Idiots* have translated into powerful cognitive outcomes, as evidenced by substantial increases in tourist arrivals and the material reconfiguration of Pangong Lake as a film-themed attraction. Media reports note that “the success of *Three Idiots* has shaken up the patterns of tourism in Ladakh, causing a surge in the number of domestic tourists”, with arrivals nearly quadrupling within a few years of the film’s

release (Sruthijith, 2013). Local policy discourse has begun to recognise this film-driven transformation. The Ladakh administration, for instance, describes the region as holding “immense potential as [a] global film destination”, implicitly acknowledging that screen representations have become central to its tourism strategy. However, these cognitive effects have also produced environmental and socio-cultural tensions. Commentators and activists warn that Pangong Lake, once relatively pristine, now experiences severe crowding, with “vehicles clogging narrow roads, and sewage and plastic pollution” altering the fragile ecosystem. Reports observe that tourist numbers in Ladakh reached 277,255 in a recent year, more than twice the population of Leh district, raising concerns that the “serene beauty” celebrated in *3 Idiots* is being eroded by overtourism and inadequate waste management (Amrita, 2020).

From a DIFM perspective, these dynamics illustrate how a film can create a strong conative image: viewers who have formed favourable cognitive and affective images of Ladakh as beautiful, welcoming and transformative develop a behavioural intention to visit, which then manifests in actual travel flows and the redesign of the destination’s material and symbolic landscape. The emergence of film-branded cafes, photo sets and tour packages signals the institutionalisation of the cinematic image into branding strategies, while the environmental pressures reveal the risks of uncritically leveraging film-induced conative power. This tension between economic opportunity and ecological vulnerability sets up a critical thread for later discussion, highlighting the need to consider ethical and sustainability issues when reading film tourism through the lens of destination image formation.

V. CASE STUDY- II: ZINDAGI NA MILEGI DOBARA AND SPAIN

5.1. Cognitive Construction of Spain

By contrast, *Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara* configures Spain as a tightly curated itinerary of iconic landscapes, cultural attractions and adventure activities designed for affluent Indian travellers. The film maps a bachelor road trip across Barcelona’s modernist architecture and bustling streets, Costa Brava’s secluded beaches and cliffs (near Blanes and Cadaqués), Pamplona’s bull run, Buñol’s tomato festival (La Tomatina), Seville’s flamenco venues and Ronda’s dramatic bridges. Each location foregrounds distinct attributes: Costa Brava beaches invite scuba diving amid turquoise waters; Pamplona’s streets pulse with the San Fermín festival’s bull run; Buñol explodes in chaotic tomato-throwing revelry; Seville offers sensual flamenco,

tapas and wine, while smooth highways and convertible drives emphasise modern infrastructure.

These representations emphasise Spain’s cosmopolitanism, safety, organisation and experiential richness, aligning with cognitive image attributes in Baloglu and McCleary’s model. The protagonists navigate seamlessly from airport to luxury hotels like Barcelona’s Casa Fuster, using efficient roads and public spaces without visible barriers, projecting a secure, well-ordered environment for urban Indians. Festivals and activities are depicted as accessible spectacles, locals cheer the bull run, flamenco dancers exude hospitality, while gastronomy (wine, paella) signals cultural immersion and value. Modernity blends with tradition: sleek convertibles traverse ancient plazas, making Spain a playground of curated thrills rather than raw wilderness.

5.2. Affective Image: Exhilaration, Intimacy, Self-reinvention

Music, poetry, slow-motion and group dynamics in *ZNMD* build feelings of exhilaration, camaraderie, romance and personal transformation attached to Spanish spaces. Voiceover poems recited against Costa Brava sunsets evoke introspection, turning to joy; the bull run’s chaos dissolves into triumphant laughter; flamenco scenes pulse with sensual release; and diving sequences symbolise confronting fears. These moments layer intimacy onto public spectacles, the friends’ banter and hugs amid crowds, tying emotional bonds to Spain’s vibrancy. These map to DIFM’s affective axes as high arousal (exciting, arousing), high pleasure (pleasant, joyful) and controlled risk, scripting Spain as a site of intense but safe exhilaration. Slow-motion bull run and diving shots heighten arousal without peril; vibrant colours and upbeat tracks like “Señorita” amplify pleasure against the protagonists’ initial gloom; pacing alternates frenzy with serene beaches, balancing excitement and relaxation. The result is an effective image of Spain as liberating and transformative, distinct from *3 Idiots*’ serene hopefulness.

5.3. Cognitive Image and Outbound Tourism

Evidence confirms *ZNMD*’s cognitive impact: Indian visitors to Spain surged 32–65% post-release, from 46,000 in mid-2011 to 115,000 by year-end, doubling to over 200,000 within years. Spain’s tourism board leveraged the film via the “I need Spain” campaign (2010–2016), offering visa fast-tracks, discounts and targeted ads, crediting Bollywood for the boom. Operators now offer *ZNMD*-themed tours: ₹2.5 lakh eight-day packages tracing Barcelona to Seville, including skydiving, Tomatina recreations and flamenco, marketed to nostalgic friend groups. Through DIFM, the film converts cognitive richness and affective joy into concrete intentions,

materialising as aspirational itineraries for India's middle class seeking cosmopolitan escape. This aligns cinematic journeys with Spain's branding, turning abstract desire into booked trips.

VI. COMPARATIVE DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

6.1. Comparing Cognitive–affective–conative Patterns

Table: 1- Comparative Destination Images in 3 Idiots and ZNMD

DIFM Component	Ladakh (3 Idiots)	Spain (ZNMD)
Cognitive	Remote natural scenery (Pangong Lake, mountains); basic infrastructure (roads, guesthouses); escape from urbanity; purity, safety, accessibility for domestic travellers.	Iconic attractions (beaches, festivals, flamenco); adventure activities (diving, bull run); modern roads, cosmopolitan cities; experiential richness, organisation.
Affective	Pleasant, relaxing, hopeful; serene arousal; nostalgia, reconciliation, self-discovery.	High pleasure, exciting, arousing; exhilaration, camaraderie, romance; controlled risk and joy.
Conative	Domestic surges (4x arrivals); “3 Idiots points”, props, cafes; local film policy.	Outbound boom (32-65% Indian visitors); ZNMD tours, “I need Spain” alignment.

The table reveals overlaps in accessibility and safety cues, reflecting Bollywood's middle-class gaze, but stark contrasts in scope and tone. Ladakh's cognitive emphasis on unspoiled nature supports an affective serenity suited to inner journeys, yielding conative effects like photo recreations that “relive” the reunion. Spain's attribute diversity, from festivals to cuisine, fuels high-arousal pleasure, manifesting in themed itineraries that replicate the road trip. These differences highlight how films tailor images to domestic (achievable escape) versus international (aspirational glamour) contexts.

6.2. Implications for DIFM and Film/Literary Studies

These readings demonstrate the adaptability of DIFM from survey-based tourism research to qualitative film analysis, with narrative, character and genre mediating image components. Originally designed for statistical modelling of traveller responses, Baloglu and McCleary's framework translates productively to textual decoding: films as stimuli encode cognitive attributes in mise-en-scène (landscapes, props) and affective tones in editing, music and arcs, yielding conative proxies in tourism data. The road movie genre, for instance, structures both films' spatial progression as emotional resolution, a dimension absent in quantitative DIFM applications but crucial for understanding cinematic image formation. Characters serve as proxies for viewers, their transformations imprinting affective value onto places, while ensemble dynamics

Both *3 Idiots* and *Zindagi Na Milegi Dobara* deploy road-trip structures and male friendship narratives to construct destination images, yet articulate divergent roles for Ladakh and Spain. The films share a motif of spatial movement as psychological transformation, but Ladakh emerges as an introspective, quasi-spiritual retreat of purity and closure, while Spain functions as an extroverted, experiential playground of thrill and reinvention. Table 1 synthesises these patterns through Baloglu and McCleary's DIFM components.

evoke aspirational intimacy. This adaptation enriches film/literary studies by providing tourism theory's empirical rigour for place analysis. Bollywood's bildungsroman elements, youthful quests mirroring literary journeys, gain precision through DIFM's typology, revealing how screen texts prefigure real travel. Future research could integrate audience reception via social media sentiment analysis or TripAdvisor reviews to measure cognitive responses directly or use eye-tracking to quantify visual stimuli uptake. Longitudinal studies tracking image evolution post-release, or transmedia extensions (trailers, memes), would further test the model's dynamism.

6.3. Closing Remarks

This chapter contributes by illuminating Bollywood's dual role in rebranding domestic (Ladakh) and international (Spain) destinations, while validating DIFM as a lens for reading films as travel texts. It shows how cognitive, affective and cognitive images interlock to drive tourism, from Pangong photo points to ZNMD tours. Yet film-induced tourism raises ethical questions, particularly sustainability in fragile ecologies like Ladakh, where overtourism strains water and waste systems, and commodified representations of Spain that risk stereotyping. Policymakers must balance economic gains with conservation, ensuring cinematic allure enhances rather than erodes destinations.

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